“Crying Over Spilled Milk”: A Publishing History of Sam Steele’s *Forty Years in Canada*¹

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In 1906, the former Mountie Samuel Benfield Steele decided to write a memoir that his friend Roger Pocock argued would be superior to any text produced by “the dry-as-dust historian, [who] need[s] to rely upon grubby manuscripts.”² According to Pocock, Steele had “unique opportunities of getting accurate information” because he had participated in the Red River Rebellion, the Klondike Gold Rush, and the Second Boer War and thus possessed a wealth of exciting experiences to draw upon. Still, Steele was less concerned with the entertainment value of the proposed book than memorializing his contributions to the North West Mounted Police (NWMP) and the military. He intended with the publication of *Forty Years in Canada* (1915) to burnish his reputation as an imperial hero of law and order. While Steele regarded his memoir as a way to shape his public image, he would find as a neophyte author that he had little or no control of the complicated and drawn-out publication process, which was dysfunctional in part because Steele was on the opposite side of the Atlantic from his editor and publisher. He was accustomed to soldiers following his command but would find that neither his editor nor his publisher was willing to do his bidding without question or allow him to “write it in my own way.”³ The dysfunction of this transnational partnership between Winnipeg, where Steele was located, and London would repeatedly threaten to derail the publication of *Forty Years in*

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² Roger Pocock to Sam Steele, 8 March 1909, Sir Samuel Steele Collection, University of Alberta, Edmonton (hereafter cited as the Steele Collection). When applicable MS numbers are provided.

³ Steele to Marie Steele, 22 March 1909, Steele Collection, MS 2008.2.1.1.1.881.

Canada. Moreover, when the memoir was finally published in 1915, after numerous delays and a change in publishers, Steele was left disappointed with the final product.⁴

Steele was the best-known policeman outside of fiction by the time he returned in 1906 to Canada from South Africa, where he had led Strathcona's Horse during the Second Boer War and afterwards held command of Division B of the South African Constabulary (SAC). A *Montreal Daily Star* article, discussing his arrival in Canada, portrayed Steele as an imperial hero who could hold an audience spellbound with "his quiet but thrilling narrative[s]" about his time with the NWMP in the West and the SAC in South Africa.⁵ Steele's heroic exploits were not only lionized in Canadian newspapers but also mythologized in contemporary fiction. In 1906, L. Frank Baum, the author of the *Wizard of Oz* series, published under the pen name Captain Hugh Fitzgerald a novel titled *Sam Steele's Adventures on Land and Sea*. Baum reimagined Sam as a young, American boy who faced adversity while crewing a ship taking provisions to the miners in the Klondike during the gold rush. Steele's life also inspired Canadian author Ralph Connor (Charles W. Gordon) when he wrote *Corporal Cameron of the North West Mounted Police* (1912) about a young Scottish man, Cameron, who joins the NWMP. Cameron, like his inspiration, viewed violence as a last resort and was known for being "rock-like in steadiness."⁶ In the early twentieth century, Steele was feted in both newspapers and novels alike as a masculine ideal who used his brain and negotiating skills more often than his fists to keep the peace.

While Steele's public portrayal was overwhelmingly positive and he did not shy away from his growing fame, documents and letters in the Sam Steele Collection at the University of Alberta indicate he was not entirely comfortable with his public image and was even angered by articles such as the one that appeared in "*Canada*" Magazine in

⁴ The Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) includes an entry for an edition of *Forty Years in Canada* that was published in Toronto in 1914 by McClelland, Goodchild and Stewart. This date is incorrect and the book was not published until 1915. Steele's British publisher, Herbert Jenkins, licensed McClelland, Goodchild and Stewart to sell the book in Canada.

⁵ "Our London Letter: Col. Steele Makes a Hit at the Canada Club Diner," *Montreal Daily Star*, 29 December 1906, in family scrapbook, number 5, Steele Collection.

⁶ Ralph Connor, *Corporal Cameron of the North West Mounted Police* (London: Hodder & Stoughton; New York: George H. Doran Company, 1912), 2.

December 1906. "Colonel Steele's Reminiscences: Interview with the World's Finest Scout" praised Steele in effusive terms: "Upright as a dart, tall and broad-shouldered, he still carries himself with the same alacrity that distinguished him when he joined the North-West Mounted Police over thirty years ago, and was the second member, either officer or man, to become enrolled in that now famous force ... African suns and prairie heat and frost have given his features a healthy tan, and he has the appearance of being 'hard as nails.' A firm-set jaw and mouth, and the look in his sharp but kindly eyes immediately stamp him as a born leader of men."⁷ In a family scrapbook, Harwood Steele, Sam's son, wrote above the clipping of the published article, "Colonel Steele strongly protested over the extravagant praise."⁸ Harwood also recorded his father's rejection of the draft of the article in the scrapbook: "Proof of 'Canada' Article seen by Colonel Steele after it appeared in 1906 – Angrily Deleted by him."

What exactly did Steele find offensive or objectionable about the article in "*Canada*" *Magazine*? Steele's friend, former NWMP constable, Roger Pocock supplied an answer in a letter dated 29 December 1906: "I've been so often raw with pain over abuse, slander, ridicule, or sickening gush in the press that – damn it all its fun to see you writhe. There's no redress on earth, but possibly a specially warmed compartment for editors down below. Don't blame the poor little liar who in his vague inaccurate way made a hero of you. If you were a self advertising bounder, or ever had played to the gallery the West would have found you out and said so long ago and the West is shrewd enough not to take press extracts for gospel."⁹ Steele did not like the article's "gush" and worried that the public would think he was conceited and vain. In a letter to the magazine's editor, also dated 29 December 1906, Steele wrote,

you, a newspaper editor of highstanding [sic], must be aware that to place such a heading to the article as you have done was a grievous wrong to me, for I have never once claimed to be what you state nor do I know any man who can. I would also be acting the part of a tactless fool or knave if I personally sanction the entry

⁷ "Colonel Steele's Reminiscences: Interview with the World's Finest Scout," "*Canada*" *Magazine*, 29 December 1906, in family scrapbook, number 5, Steele Collection.

⁸ Handwritten note on "Colonel Steele's Reminiscences," in family scrapbook, number 5, Steele Collection.

⁹ Pocock to Steele, 29 December 1906, Steele Collection, MS 15-3/ 1906-9.

of a statement to the effect that any particular regiment was, in the South African War, superior to all of the rest, and my crime would be made worse by the fact that I was instrumental in raising more than one corps for the war and would throw the apple of discord amongst comrades and neighbours in Canada, apart from the mischief I would create in other parts of the Empire where I have friends.¹⁰

Originally, the editor had promised Steele that he would get final approval on the article's contents before publication, but due to a missed telephone call, Steele had not had the chance to view the proofs.¹¹ While he did not want to be thought a braggart, Steele was also angered by his loss of control of the approval process.

Steele's initial decision to write his memoir can thus be traced to this period in his life when he was increasingly worried about his portrayal in the media and how it might affect his legacy. He felt that writing his own memoir would allow him to convey a flattering truth of his experiences during the Red River Rebellion, the Klondike Gold Rush, as well as other Canadian or South African events he either participated in or witnessed. In 1909, he noted in a letter to his wife Marie that "I wrote Pocock about the book and he suggests that I write it in my own way and not be afraid of the capital. That people want to hear of me and that I should not 'hide my light.'"¹² Steele wanted with the publication of *Forty Years in Canada* to control more than counter the public mythologizing surrounding himself. He somewhat naively believed in the power of print and thought that if he could produce an authorized memoir, it would become the official one that would help to project and protect his preferred vision of his public identity.

By 1909, Steele was actively writing his autobiography, which opened with his involvement in the first crisis the government faced following Confederation in 1867 – the Red River Rebellion – and concluded with an overview of his time in South Africa. The memoir would also include Steele's remembrances of the development of the NWMP and his exploits as a Mountie during the Northwest Rebellion and the Klondike. Steele worked on the memoir primarily at night, as he had upon returning to Canada taken command of military district thirteen and in 1908 been transferred to Winnipeg

¹⁰ Steele to W. Lefroy, 29 December 1906, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.1.2.157.

¹¹ Lefroy to Steele, 28 December 1906, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.1.2.157.

¹² Steele to Marie Steele, 22 March 1909, Steele Collection, MS 2008.2.1.1.1.881.

to command military district ten. While Steele relied in part on his "most marvellous memory ... [to] make a most interesting book," he also asked former colleagues and friends to send him their journals, reports, and any documents that would help him write an authentic account of these events.¹³ Steele was obsessed with accurately illustrating history and correcting the media's image of the West and what he considered their careless and slapdash reporting of his life and career. In March 1909, he noted in his journal "that the papers have a quite inaccurate report of the speech I made on the Red River expedition the stenographers here are poor or careless."¹⁴ Repeatedly, Steele remarked on other people's carelessness and how he must, in contrast, be disciplined and demand the truth in his writing of the memoir. Steele believed double-checking his reminiscences against those of his colleagues would help to safeguard the truth.

By September 1909 with the memoir slowly beginning to take shape, Steele contacted Lord Strathcona, Sir Donald Smith, about dedicating the memoir to one "who has had a long and important connection to the West."¹⁵ The railway baron and politician promptly replied, "I accede with pleasure to your wish in respect to my connection with it."¹⁶ However, Strathcona reminded Steele that the memoir should not include anything that would damage the regiment and its namesake: "I know full well that any book you may write while interesting and instructive will in no way compromise one or another." Strathcona's consent meant much to Steele, who admired the man who had sponsored Strathcona's Horse during the Second Boer War.¹⁷ Steele readily agreed to omit any unfavorable facts about the regiment and its time in South Africa, and when he submitted the relative chapters to his editor, he assured her that "I have put everything as mildly as possible. It is just possible that Lord Strathcona will want to read that part over very carefully, but there should be no trouble as I have said less than anyone who has written an account of the war, and kept out such which really should have been written about the events."¹⁸ Despite Steele's repeated statements that

¹³ Steele to Marie Steele, 22 March 1909, Steele Collection, MS 2008.2.1.1.1.881.

¹⁴ Journal entry, 25 March 1909, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.2.49 8/1. Rod Macleod graciously provided transcripts of Steele's journals for my use.

¹⁵ Steele to Lord Strathcona, 3 September 1909, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.1.3.11.

¹⁶ Lord Strathcona to Steele, 24 September 1909, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.1.3.11.

¹⁷ Journal entry, 28 September 1909, Steele Collection, 2008.1.1.2.49.

¹⁸ Steele to Niblett, 11 April 1913, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.4.32.

he was primarily concerned with historical accuracy, his willingness to omit information that even he felt should have been included in order not to lose Strathcona's dedication indicates that his pursuit of authenticity only went so far.¹⁹ Even after Strathcona's death in January 1914, prior to the completion of the manuscript, Steele made no attempt to add material to the South African chapters in order to correct the historical record.²⁰ He was more concerned with safeguarding his own reputation and maintaining the Strathcona family's patronage. In the same letter to his editor in which he wrote that they should not do anything to upset the Strathcona family, Steele would also state, "I am anxious that the book should be accurate."²¹ However, Steele was primarily concerned with his portrayal in the memoir and was more than willing to omit material if it was to his benefit to do so.

Once he had secured Strathcona's agreement, Steele turned his attention to the issue of publication. Between 1909 and 1912, he solicited friends and colleagues for guidance on what to do with the memoir, admitting that he had little knowledge of the book trade. In 1909, an acquaintance, Mrs. McGregor, advised he serialize the memoir and publish it in a magazine.²² That same year, Pocock suggested he approach the venerable London publisher, John Murray, to see if the firm would take it: "When you have finished your book, taking care to have at least two typed copies, send one of them to me, so that I may approach John Murray, with a view to a British edition. I might even suggest two copies, as through my agents here I might be able to place both British and United States editions, leaving you perfectly free to negotiate a Canadian edition."²³ An experienced novelist and memorialist, Pocock had published a number of his works with John Murray and believed that his publisher would be interested in Steele's work. Steele would eventually take his friend's advice to secure a British publisher but not before a failed attempt to self-publish the memoir. In December 1910, he unsuccessfully tried to arrange a loan to pay for the printing of the book.²⁴ In January 1911, Steele was reminded of Pocock's earlier suggestion when James

¹⁹ Steele to Robert Baden-Powell, 13 March 1910, Steele Collection, MS 2008.I.I.I.3.II.

²⁰ Niblett to Steele, 22 January 1914, Steele Collection, MS 2008.I.I.I.2.24I.

²¹ Steele to Niblett, 11 February 1914, Steele Collection, MS 2008.I.I.I.4.32.

²² Journal entry, 1 October 1909, Steele Collection, MS 2008.I.I.2.49 8/I.

²³ Pocock to Steele, 8 March 1909, Steele Collection.

²⁴ Journal entry, 26 December 1910, Steele Collection, MS 2008.I.I.2.51 8/3.

Ross sent Steele his narrative of "his most interesting experience with the Mounted Police," and offered to see publishers when he was next in London.²⁵ Ross wanted to secure for Steele "the best terms obtainable," and in a second letter he agreed to approach John Murray on Steele's behalf.²⁶ Ross, like Pocock, believed that Steele's interests would be best served if he sought British publication followed by publication in Canada and the United States.²⁷ Nothing came of Ross's visit to London, but Steele was now determined to pursue British publication, so in 1912 he engaged an agent who could not only place the manuscript with a publisher but also edit it.

Steele employed Mollie Glenn Niblett, an American journalist with the *Winnipeg Telegram*. Niblett had first travelled to Canada during the Klondike Gold Rush to report for both the *San Francisco Examiner* and *New York Herald*; she had then settled in Winnipeg, where she married.²⁸ Steele first mentioned making arrangements to work with Niblett in his diary on 30 April 1912, and by August 1912 he recorded that she had contacted the British publisher Seeley Service and Co. on his behalf about producing a three-volume memoir.²⁹ Throughout the summer and fall, Niblett helped Steele edit the still uncompleted manuscript. She wanted to get as much of the manuscript finished before moving to London where she would work for the Canadian government and write for the *Winnipeg Telegram*. Just before she left in November 1912, she signed an agreement with him, which would see him pay her two hundred dollars: "I have this day accepted manuscript for a book on the early days of Western Canada written by Col. S.B. Steele – This manuscript to be placed by me on the London publishing market – I claim no interest in said manuscript, other than doing my utmost to hasten publication and in every way work for the best interest of said publication."³⁰

The first signs of trouble in their working relationship appeared six to seven weeks after Niblett had left Winnipeg for London. She

²⁵ Mr. Hogg (private secretary) for James Ross to Steele, 9 January 1911, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.3.12.

²⁶ Hogg for James Ross to Steele, 23 January 1911, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.3.12.

²⁷ Steele to Marie Steele, 22 March 1909, Steele Collection, MS 2008.2.1.1.1.881.

²⁸ Niblett continued to work as a journalist throughout the period in which she worked for Steele, 1912–17.

²⁹ Journal entries, 30 April and 30 August 1912, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.2.60.

³⁰ Niblett to Steele, 31 October 1912, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.1.2.226; contract between Niblett and Steele, 6 November 1912, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.1.2.227.

failed to write to Steele, who had asked her to keep him informed of any progress and was expecting to hear from her. Impatient, he grew increasingly frustrated with her silence and the distance that separated him from his agent, who would “be of much assistance” if he could only communicate with her and instruct her about his wishes with regards to publication.³¹ In the journal entry for 20 December 1912, he noted he was “anxious to hear from” Niblett, as he had received a letter from the “important” London publisher, Herbert Jenkins, who like Seeley Service, the firm Niblett had contacted in August, was interested in publishing the memoir.³² Steele had two publishers to choose from and a decision to make; however, he did not have his agent’s London address or any way to communicate his wishes to her.³³

Continuing to work on the manuscript, Steele eventually recorded in his journal in early January 1913 that he had finally received a letter from Niblett, and he immediately replied to her missive, instructing her to try to secure “one third of the proceeds and that copyright must be all right.”³⁴ Niblett had already started negotiating with one or more publishers, possibly Seeley Service and Herbert Jenkins, before writing to Steele, who wanted her to pick the publisher who would provide him with the best possible terms for his three-volume memoir. Two weeks later, he would record in his journal that a decision had been made and that Niblett had “chosen Seeley Service and Co. London to publish it,” although the firm would only produce a one-volume memoir and no contract had been signed, since the publisher wanted the complete manuscript in hand before doing so.³⁵

Niblett had provided Seeley Service with a copy of the first part of Steele’s manuscript when they had started negotiating, and this section included his recollections of the Red River Expedition and his early years with the NWMP. As Steele continued to work on the manuscript, both he and Niblett waited for the publisher to return the initial portion so editing could begin.³⁶ Through the spring, Steele had his daughter, Flora, clean and type up the latest handwritten

³¹ Steele to Herbert Jenkins, 4 May 1915, Steele Archive, MS 2008.1.1.1.2.263.

³² Journal entry, 20 December 1912, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.2.60.

³³ Steele wrote to William Cory, deputy minister of the interior, and Vivian Steele trying to find a London address for Mollie Glenn Niblett. Journal entry, 24 December 1912, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.2.60.

³⁴ Journal entry, 3 January 1913, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.2.62.

³⁵ Journal entry, 23 January 1913, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.2.62.

³⁶ Niblett to Steele, 8 May 1913, Steele Collection MS 2008.1.1.1.2.233.

chapters, which covered his time in the Yukon.³⁷ He mailed the Klondike section to Niblett in April, and a month later the publisher finally replied, telling Steele “[w]e like the last batch of MS. which came to us through her [Niblett], much better than the earlier.”³⁸ While approving of his lively descriptions of the events and “personal incidents” in the Yukon chapters, Seeley Service did not care for the first part of the manuscript and insisted on a large number of changes that would delay publication. The firm demanded a complete rewrite of the Red River Expedition section, one that would emphasize “personal incident and adventure”: “The account of the Red River Expedition would be greatly improved if it could be dealt with in the same manner. Its diary form gives it a sameness which is undesirable. We consulted with Mrs. Niblett and finally arranged with her that it would be well to compress it, which we have done, but there is a certain amount of linking up necessary. This we could not easily carry out so when you are doing that, we would suggest that you should introduce a good deal of personal incident and adventure into this part also. We hope this will be possible.” A question then must be raised as to why Seeley Service agreed to work with Steele in the first place if they found the preliminary draft to be poorly written. Perhaps Steele’s fame made him a marketable prospect or perhaps the strength of the Klondike section made up for the weaker chapters. What is clear is that Seeley Service demanded many changes, including a diminution in the material on South Africa because readers “are very sick of the South African War.” Seeley Service also rejected the pictures Steele and Niblett had provided for inclusion in the book because of either poor quality or questions of copyright. Believing that the manuscript needed extensive editing and that the author needed guidance, Seeley Service sent Steele further, detailed instructions a week later, adding that the revisions and the last chapters needed to be completed by the beginning of August 1913 so that publication could occur in the spring of 1914.³⁹ Steele, busy with his military command, replied that he could not work on the revisions or finish writing the manuscript until the fall.⁴⁰ Seeley Service agreed to defer publication and admitted that a delay would not harm a work having “much value, written as

³⁷ Steele to Marie Steele, 4 March 1913, Steele Collection, MS 2008.2.1.1.1.1041.

³⁸ Seeley Service to Steele, 16 May 1913, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.1.2.233.

³⁹ Seeley Service to Steele, 23 May 1913, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.1.2.233.

⁴⁰ Niblett to Steele, 27 June 1913, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.1.2.233.

it is by one who knows all the facts and is writing from the inside.”⁴¹ However, this setback would be only the first of many.

The process of editing the manuscript led to multiple delays, pushing the date of publication from the spring to the fall and then to the winter of 1915. The reader, Mr. Davidson, at Seeley Service would read Steele’s chapters providing comments and feedback, and then the firm would mail the manuscript back to Steele in Winnipeg so he could make the required changes. Working on the manuscript at night, Steele would slowly go through Davidson’s suggestions, while also attempting to finish writing the manuscript, which was still not complete. By June 1913, Steele had informed the publisher that he could not keep to the suggested schedule: he was simply too busy with his military command.⁴² Niblett was not happy about this delay. In subsequent letters, she asked him to rush – “I know you will hurry all you can” – and send her the revised manuscript, which she was “anxious” to receive.⁴³ Niblett may also have been anxious about the editing process itself, which she felt undermined her authority, for Seeley Service preferred to deal with Steele directly. It seems that Niblett wanted to take a more active role in the proceedings and edit the manuscript, but she reluctantly agreed that Steele needed to review it: “The publishers are so very anxious to have the book absolutely perfect (and evidently do not think my authority sufficient) that they are sending the entire book back to you, with a few condensed chapters, for your approval. I had a long chat with the reader ... and he feels that everyone concerned would be happier if you put your seal on the book MSS before it goes into the printers hands – After all I suppose it is the safest way – it would be irreparable if the book came out and an important statement or description had been twisted and after all you are the only one who knows at first hand.”⁴⁴ With Steele unable to work on the manuscript and Seeley Service unwilling to accept Niblett’s editorial authority, by the summer of 1913 all work on the manuscript had ceased and the publication date was further delayed.

⁴¹ Seeley Service to Steele, 19 June 1913, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.1.2.233.

⁴² Seeley Service to Steele, 19 June 1913, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.1.2.233.

⁴³ Niblett to Steele, 3 July 1913, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.1.2.235; Niblett to Steele, 31 July 1913, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.1.2.236; Niblett to Steele, 3 September 1913, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.1.2.237.

⁴⁴ Niblett to Steele, 24 May 1913, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.1.2.233 (underlining in original).

Steele later admitted to Niblett that "in the matter of delay I am the only one to blame," seeing that he could not work on the manuscript because of his military duties; still, he added that Seeley Service shared the blame for asking for all the changes in the first place and for insisting on his editing the manuscript and approving any suggested alterations.⁴⁵ He later complained to Niblett "that they sent back the whole manuscript for me to write over again, and gave me no instructions as to what they really wanted, and when I sent the stuff to them in the first instance I did so at their request, and stated that I was not a writer, and it was necessary for them to 'trim it up,' and that what I wrote did not seem to suit them."⁴⁶ Steele argued that the publisher should have edited the memoir, but in the same letter he admitted that he was "anxious that the book should be accurate": he wanted to preserve his vision and not turn the thing into "a romance." Clearly unhappy with Seeley Service, the slow editing process, and the risk of the memoir's turning into something unrecognizable, Steele sought Pocock's advice as to whether he should continue working with the London house.⁴⁷ Pocock replied, "he had never heard of Seeley Service and Co. in his life," and he offered to write to "his agent, Mr Massie ... to let me know about the Seeley Service firm." Steele also asked Niblett to find out if Herbert Jenkins was still interested in publishing the memoir. There existed only a verbal agreement between Seeley Service and Steele, since the publisher had refused to sign a contract; consequently, Steele felt that there was nothing to stop him from moving the manuscript. Niblett reported at the end of July that she had visited Herbert Jenkins and was sending Steele "a few pages of recent criticisms on him."⁴⁸ In this letter, she also mentioned Mr. Massie, Pocock's agent, who was reviewing the manuscript and trying to help to place it.

By July 1913, Steele, Niblett, and Massie were actively pursuing a different publisher. None of them told Seeley Service, who continued to write to the author requesting additional changes to the manuscript. In July and in October, the firm wrote to Steele asking him to address problems in the South African section and condense it further.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Steele to Niblett, 20 February 1914, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.4.32; Steele to Niblett, 11 February 1914, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.4.32.

⁴⁶ Steele to Niblett, 11 February 1914, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.4.32.

⁴⁷ Seeley Service to Steele, 19 June 1913, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.1.2.233.

⁴⁸ Niblett to Steele, 31 July 1913, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.1.2.236.

⁴⁹ Seeley Service to Steele, 15 July 1913, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.1.2.237; Seeley Service to Steele, 8 October 1913, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.1.2.237.

While Niblett accepted that Seeley Service was “so very keen to get the book in shape,” she was also furious about the continuing delays and demands for changes.⁵⁰ Fed up, Niblett wrote to Steele that October and stated, “I have made up my mind to quit them.”⁵¹ Her decision not only reflected her employer’s opinion but also indicated her mounting frustration with a publisher who did not recognize her authority as Steele’s agent. Niblett was motivated to find a firm that would work with both her client and herself. By the end of the month, she had placed the manuscript with Herbert Jenkins: “I am so glad to hear that you are satisfied that S.S. Co. are too slow. I find the Jenkins people whirlwinds on the other hand.”⁵² She also reported that unlike Seeley Service, Herbert Jenkins thought Steele’s “experiences were remarkably well put together,” and she believed, over-optimistically, that if they all worked quickly, the book could be out as early as January 1914.

Niblett signed a contract on Steele’s behalf with Herbert Jenkins on 7 November 1913.⁵³ Steele did not find out about the contract until March, which is surprising since Niblett sent him a number of letters in the intervening months and since her letters tended toward being chatty and overly informative. It is likely that Niblett was preoccupied with trying to avoid the eruption of a scandal over her client’s switching publishers.

Seeley Service refused to accept Steele’s decision to work with their competitor. In a letter dated 27 January 1914, the firm outlined their grievances and appealed to him as “an honourable gentleman” to alter this “unfair” decision.⁵⁴ Service also added that the firm had been unfairly blamed for the delays: “We have come across another letter from Mrs. Niblett, a copy of which we send to you. You will see in it she does not blame us, but you. As a matter of fact, so far as we can see, no blame can be attached to anybody, as you were too busy at the time to undertake the work entailed, and therefore the book has had to be held over. The fact remains, however, that we were charged with delay, and discourtesy in not recognizing your agent, on neither of which counts were we in the least to blame.”

⁵⁰ Niblett to Steele, 12 June 1913, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.1.2.246.

⁵¹ Niblett to Steele, 15 October 1913, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.1.2.237.

⁵² Niblett to Steele, 27 October 1913, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.1.2.237; Niblett to Steele, 7 November 1913, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.1.2.239.

⁵³ Contract between Herbert Jenkins and Steele, 7 November 1913, Herbert Jenkins Archive in the Random House Archive, Rushden, United Kingdom.

⁵⁴ Seeley Service to Steele, 27 January 1914, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.4.32.

Seeley Service, unaware a contract with Herbert Jenkins had been signed, still wanted to publish the memoir, and their letter indicated a belief that they could persuade Steele to honour the verbal contract.

In a letter to Niblett, dated 11 February 1914, Steele summarized Seeley Service's case and the evidence that Niblett had provided them in the form of a letter. Concerned that the publisher "wish[ed] to make trouble," Steele warned Niblett to be on guard as the firm might seek legal recourse or simply make public the complaint.⁵⁵ He also told her that he did not blame her for providing the publisher with evidence and acknowledged that he was culpable for the delays. Still, whereas the publisher had argued that in the end no one was to blame for the circumstances, Steele vehemently disagreed; he argued that the publisher was at fault for asking for all the changes. He also considered the request to add adventure and excitement to the memoir to be anathema to his stated goal. Seeley Service did not ask him to fictionalize his account in any of their letters, but Steele believed that adding "romance" to the memoir would jeopardize its authenticity, imperilling what Pocock had argued would be "a work of great importance and historical value."⁵⁶ While Steele claimed that he wanted to produce a definitive history of his time in Canada and South Africa and feared that Seeley Service would edit the manuscript into something worthless, he was perhaps more concerned that the book would end up presenting him in a less favourable manner than he wished. Consequently, he told Niblett that he would not reinstate the publisher, and "I should suggest that Seeley Service and Co. be kept from spoiling the chances of the book." Still, Steele worried that the jilted publisher would cause a scandal that might result in his losing Lord Strathcona's dedication.

In a second letter, Steele again warned Niblett to "make sure that you have no law suit nor any unpleasantness ... They can hurt the book, hurt you and me for they have the documents to prove that in the matter of delay I am the only one to blame."⁵⁷ He believed that "[n]ow that Lord Strathcona's name is to be brought into the book, it is most important that there should be no trouble." Steele, who had regarded Strathcona as his mentor and "more like my father than any man I have met since I lost my own," did not want to face any legal action as he worried this would lead Lord Strathcona's

⁵⁵ Steele to Niblett, 11 February 1914, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.4.32.

⁵⁶ Pocock to Steele, 8 March 1909, Steele Collection.

⁵⁷ Steele to Niblett, 20 February 1914, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.4.32.

family to withdraw their support for the memoir.⁵⁸ Strathcona had died in January 1914 but on his deathbed he had arranged for J.G. Colmer to write a foreword for the memoir based on the historian's conversations with him about Steele. The potential for scandal eventually dissipated after Niblett made clear to Seeley Service, in tense negotiations in February and March, that her employer would, if he deigned to reinstate them as his publisher, not take less than a 25 percent royalty on all copies of the memoir. As expected, Seeley Service reluctantly relinquished its claim on the memoir in the shadow of such demands. Steele avoided scandal, and Niblett avoided having to tell her employer that she had already signed an agreement with Herbert Jenkins.

Not knowing about the existing contract, Steele directed Niblett, in a letter dated 2 March 1914, to start negotiations with Herbert Jenkins and to request a high royalty rate: "I should have from 20% to 25% royalty."⁵⁹ The November contract provided a royalty of only 10 percent on the first one thousand British copies sold and 15 percent thereafter, which was a standard industry amount. When Steele told Niblett he wanted higher rates, she approached the British publisher about renegotiating the contract. Attached to Herbert Jenkins's signed copy of the contract is a note dated 13 March 1914 indicating that the publisher agreed to pay a 15 percent royalty on the first 750 books, 20 percent on the next 1250, and 25 percent on all others.⁶⁰ The unsigned and undated copy of the contract that Steele received included this change in royalty rates; however, when he received his first royalty statement in 1916 the royalties were the standard 10 and 15 percent. Either Herbert Jenkins made a mistake or the change was never formally added to the contract.⁶¹ Negotiating through a third party and at a distance, Steele was at a disadvantage and had to rely on Niblett to safeguard his interests. Clearly, she was not always successful.

Steele finished the manuscript on 14 April 1914 and mailed the last chapters to London for review. Even though he thought the manuscript was now complete, shortly thereafter he received a letter

⁵⁸ Steele to Niblett, 11 February 1914, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.4.32.

⁵⁹ Steele to Niblett, 2 March 1914, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.4.32.

⁶⁰ Contract between Herbert Jenkins and Steele, 7 November 1913, Herbert Jenkins Archive.

⁶¹ Steele's copy of the publishing contract, undated, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.4.31; royalty statement, 31 March 1916, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.4.34.

from his new publisher requesting additional material. Herbert Jenkins wrote to Steele recounting a lunch with Steele's colleague and friend Sir Robert Baden-Powell who told the publisher a story about Louis Riel's execution. When the condemned man had announced that he would rise up like Jesus Christ, Steele, who was supposedly in attendance that day in 1885, responded that with the "N.W.M.P. ... there would be no rising on the third day," according to Baden-Powell.⁶² Jenkins asked Steele if the tale was true, and if it was, "it certainly ought to be included." Steele did not reply to this request and the incident was not included in the memoir. After reading the final chapters, Herbert Jenkins also demanded further alterations. No letters survive documenting the publisher's exact requests but Steele later found out that the firm thought his manuscript was poorly organized and written.⁶³ An angry Steele had to be calmed by Niblett, who suggested that he had "misconstrued Mr Jenkins meaning in the statement contained in his letter referring to the MSS as a 'shapeless mass of material.' You must know my dear Colonel that while the MSS was full of excellent material it was not in form to present to the public." The letter Niblett refers to, in which Herbert Jenkins described the manuscript in less than complimentary terms, has not, it seems, survived. Perhaps in a fit of rage Steele destroyed it. Niblett had to placate the irate author with the thought that after only a few more changes the book would be ready to go to printing. Finally, Niblett reported in May that the manuscript was in the final editing phase and that by the end of the summer she would be able to "place in [Steele's] ... hands the first copy of the book."⁶⁴

Before Niblett could do so, however, she had "to revise 500 pages of printed matter." Still concerned with the fidelity of the memoir and his portrayal, Steele had already asked her to avoid cutting anything that might affect or misconstrue the truth.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, he acknowledged that he could not check every proof as this would further delay publication – a decision he would later come to regret. Sensitive about his age, the sixty-six-year-old Steele requested that Niblett make sure the publisher and Colmer not use the phrase "old timer."⁶⁶ Steele stated that he "hate[d] the name 'old timer'" but

⁶² Herbert Jenkins to Steele, 1 April 1914, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.4.32.

⁶³ Niblett to Steele, 7 August 1914, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.4.33 (underlining in original letter).

⁶⁴ Niblett to Steele, 24 May 1914, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.1.2.245.

⁶⁵ Steele to Niblett, 11 February 1914, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.4.32.

⁶⁶ Steele to Niblett, 2 March 1914, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.4.32.

would accept the word “pioneer” instead. In the same letter, Steele, believing the contract with Herbert Jenkins was still to be negotiated by Niblett, wrote “I do not trust publishers,” and this sentiment, which he underscored in his letter, encompassed his feelings about the entire publishing process so far. Steele believed that his only advocate was Niblett, and he was clearly worried about how the publisher was perhaps reshaping his text. He hoped that Niblett, who had taken on a more active role with the switch in publishers, would protect his interests.

The book was finally ready to go to press in August 1914, but its printing and distribution were further postponed by the start of the First World War. *Forty Years in Canada*, newly subtitled *Reminiscences of the Great North-West With Some Account of His Service in South Africa* (Steele had wanted the subtitle, “Prairie and Veldt”), did not appear in bookstores in Britain and Canada until February 1915. Herbert Jenkins produced three thousand copies of the British edition and licensed the book to the Canadian firm, McClelland, Goodchild and Stewart. The British house also provided Russell, Lang & Co. with a number of copies with the name of the Winnipeg bookseller on the title page. An American issue by Dodd, Mead and Company in New York was produced in 1915, based on the sheets of the British edition. When Steele received his copy of the British edition, he was unhappy with what he found: the finished product was shorter than expected and had gained an editor, Mollie Glenn Niblett. The same day on which he received notice from the Toronto company that they had the Canadian licence, he sent McClelland, Goodchild and Stewart a cable in which he bluntly stated “[r]eceived advance copy of book not at all satisfactory best of the material sacrificed for sake of space book should be two volumes hope you have not paid any money out on it yet.”⁶⁷

Prior to publication in January, *Forty Years in Canada* had already been the subject of yet another skirmish between author and publisher: Steele had demanded Herbert Jenkins delay publication. In a letter dated 27 December 1914, Steele wrote to the London publisher that so much had changed in the months since the manuscript had gone to press that it was necessary to rewrite the last section to take into account his promotion and involvement in the war. Major General Steele threatened to retaliate if Herbert Jenkins did not accede to

⁶⁷ Telegram, Steele to McClelland, Goodchild and Stewart, 22 January 1915, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.4.33.

his wishes: "If you publish it as it is, I shall be obliged to protest, and that would kill it."⁶⁸ The publisher could not accommodate Steele's unreasonable demand, for the book was already in transit for distribution in February. Niblett phoned Steele on 11 January 1915 to tell him that it was too late to halt the long-delayed memoir.⁶⁹ He had already reviewed an advance copy of the shortened memoir and found it wanting, but after receiving the actual book on 20 February, which now included Niblett's name just below his on the title page, he noted in his journal that he was "[v]ery much disgusted with the publisher."⁷⁰ He later wrote to McClelland, Goodchild and Stewart, whom he viewed as an ally who had been duped as much as he, that "[i]t is quite evident that, in order to make it a one volume book, Messrs Jenkins have sacrificed excellent material."⁷¹ He also sent a telegram on 22 February to Herbert Jenkins bluntly stating "[h]ave read book I repudiate it good matter sacrificed."⁷²

The British publisher responded immediately, replying that *Forty Years in Canada* was receiving glowing reviews in British newspapers and was selling quite well. In other words, Steele really had nothing to complain about. Herbert Jenkins also defended his firm's and Niblett's actions, noting that she had "worked so hard and loyally in your interests that now she feels very acutely that you should not be pleased with what she had done. As for ourselves, after receiving your repeated assurances that Mrs. Niblett was your agent and had full authority, we naturally looked to her as if she were yourself, and nothing was done without her full acquiescence, and I think, if you will permit me to say so, that you could not have been better served. Had the book been her own she could not have shown a livelier interest. If you had only asked to see the revised manuscript or proofs all these difficulties would have been avoided."⁷³ Certainly, Niblett had told Steele that she had had to edit the memoir for length in the spring of 1914, and he had made a decision at that point not to review the proofs because he was busy and felt that the time in transit

⁶⁸ Steele to Herbert Jenkins, 27 December 1914, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.4.33.

⁶⁹ Journal entry, 11 January 1915, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.2.66.

⁷⁰ Journal entry, 22 February 1915, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.2.66.

⁷¹ Steele to McClelland, Goodchild and Stewart, February 1915 (exact date unclear), Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.4.33.

⁷² Telegram, Steele to Herbert Jenkins, 22 February 1915, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.4.33.

⁷³ Herbert Jenkins to Steele, 10 March 1915, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.1.2.261.

between London and Winnipeg would result in unnecessary delay.⁷⁴ Moreover, he had been told by Niblett in January 1914 that “[t]he publisher suggests that my name should appear as editor but it is up to you. If you would rather not why its of no consequence.”⁷⁵ Unreasonably, Steele now suggested that she should have recognized his silence as refusal. In an April 1915 letter to Herbert Jenkins, he declared, “Mrs. Niblett did not edit the book at all.”⁷⁶ In another missive that same month, he went into more detail: “there was no Editor, except yourself and myself ... I think that you will agree with me that having anyone named as the Editor gives an entirely wrong impression of the book and of its Author, and my relatives, who know how much time and labour I spent in getting the work into shape for the Publishers, are not entirely pleased about it.”⁷⁷ Steele was concerned that all his work and effort would in some way be degraded by Mollie Glenn Niblett’s name being included on the title page.

Despite what may have seemed to him an intractable mess, Steele promised that all his complaints about *Forty Years in Canada* would be forgotten and Herbert Jenkins forgiven, if the publisher rectified the situation by quickly producing a new and expanded edition. In a letter to McClelland, Goodchild and Stewart, Steele laid out his ultimatum: “I have therefore notified the Firm named that they must either publish my book in two volumes or have nothing more to do with it.”⁷⁸ Steele was initially livid about the first edition, but over the course of the spring his anger started to dissipate as congratulations poured in and as he gathered that Herbert Jenkins was willing to work with him to produce a second edition.⁷⁹ By the end of March, Steele was more conciliatory in his correspondence with the London firm: “It is no use ‘crying over spilled milk,’ and the book will have to do as it stands for the first edition.”⁸⁰

A week later, Steele’s opinion with regards to the first edition had completely altered. He now described himself as being “well pleased with the first edition of my book, and feel[ing] that with the little matters which I have previously pointed out as requiring attention

⁷⁴ Niblett to Steele, 24 May 1914, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.1.2.245.

⁷⁵ Niblett to Steele, 22 January 1914, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.1.2.241.

⁷⁶ Steele to Herbert Jenkins, 3 April 1915, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.1.2.262.

⁷⁷ Steele to Herbert Jenkins, 4 April 1915, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.1.2.262.

⁷⁸ Steele to McClelland, Goodchild and Stewart, February 1915, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.4.33.

⁷⁹ T. Bland Stranger to Steele, 16 March 1915, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.1.2.261.

⁸⁰ Steele to Herbert Jenkins, 28 March 1915, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.4.33.

for the next edition, the publication will come up to what I had hoped.”⁸¹ Steele and his family, it seems, assumed Herbert Jenkins would fall into line with regards to the major general’s decision to produce an expanded second edition, even though the firm did not in any correspondence agree to a second edition being produced. Steele’s wife, Marie, even wrote to her husband hoping that the publisher now “quite understood what a mistake he made in curtailing so many items of interest in your book & leaving out numerous others.”⁸²

Convinced that a second edition was imminent, Steele started to work with Niblett, who had in the meantime returned to Winnipeg, on revising the manuscript barely a month after the first edition had appeared in bookstores. Steele noted in his journal that between March and May 1915 he had Niblett edit the manuscript.⁸³ Besides adding back material cut from the original manuscript and new chapters covering his promotion and the war, Steele had Niblett correct any historical or factual errors that he had made in the first edition.⁸⁴ In May, Niblett, who was to report on the war for the *Winnipeg Telegram*, left Winnipeg for London and took the manuscript with her. Steele informed Herbert Jenkins that she would write a new concluding chapter that covered Steele’s involvement in the war: “I have not had time to write the last Chapter myself so have asked Mrs. Niblett to do it for me. As previously stated in my other letters to you, I do not wish any one to be named as the Editor; the matter is one entirely between yourself and me – you summarize and index contents and publish the book which I write. Mrs. Niblett will, of course, be of much assistance, under a business arrangement which I have with her, but she is not the Editor of the work.”⁸⁵ Steele did not have the time to write the chapter because he had been named commander of the second Canadian Division and would later become commander at Shorncliffe where he would train troops for the remainder of the war. There are no records in the Steele Collection that Niblett complained about the situation. Possibly, she did not want to upset the major general because he was one of her most important sources of information for her articles on the Canadian troops. Once Steele arrived in Britain in the summer

⁸¹ Steele to Herbert Jenkins, 4 April 1915, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.1.2.262.

⁸² Marie Steele to Steele, 11 July 1915, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.1.1.372.

⁸³ Journal entries, 12, 14 March and 21 April 1915, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.2.66.

⁸⁴ Journal entry, 13 July 1915, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.2.66.

⁸⁵ Steele to Herbert Jenkins, 4 May 1915, Steele Archive, MS 2008.1.1.1.2.263.

of 1915, he started working with Niblett again on a weekly, if not daily, basis to revise the manuscript. Whereas Steele believed that a second edition would shortly be issued, Herbert Jenkins was more reticent and implied a second edition would only be approved if the demand warranted it.

In March 1916, Herbert Jenkins issued the royalty statement for the first calendar year of sales of *Forty Years in Canada*. Between February and December 1915 Herbert Jenkins sold 2319 copies of the British edition out of a print run of three thousand.⁸⁶ The majority of sales were in Canada, with the Winnipeg bookseller Russell, Lang & Co. accounting for at least five hundred of the 1560 books sold in the country.⁸⁷ While 77 percent of the first edition had been bought, during the next year sales of *Forty Years in Canada* plummeted. In 1916 only thirty-six copies of the memoir sold.⁸⁸ However, the London firm was still willing to discuss a second edition with Steele and by May 1916 a large portion of the revised manuscript was in the hands of the publishers.⁸⁹ Negotiations would continue throughout 1916 and into 1917, and Steele would note in his journal, 22 March 1917, that he had mailed a completed second edition manuscript to Herbert Jenkins.⁹⁰ Ever hopeful, Steele also recorded in his diary that he had asked the publisher about the possibility of a cheaper American edition being produced alongside the new British edition. In 1918, Herbert Jenkins indicated willingness to produce a second printing of *Forty Years in Canada* but was no longer interested in the investment of a second edition; the memoir was no longer selling in large enough numbers and there seemed to be no end to the war.

No second edition of *Forty Years in Canada* was produced before Sam Steele died of the Spanish Influenza in 1919 in London. In the 1970s, his son Harwood tried to interest British and Canadian publishers in an updated and authorized edition of his father's memoir, but before he could sign a contract for a new edition, a facsimile edition of the 1915 American issue was published by McGraw-Hill Ryerson in 1972 and a year later Coles republished the book as part of their Canadiana series. Thus what Steele imagined as

⁸⁶ Royalty account, 31 March 1916, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.4.34.

⁸⁷ The letter mentioned that the bookstore had five hundred orders for the memoir. Russell, Lang & Co. to Steele, 24 August 1914, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.4.33.

⁸⁸ Royalty account, 31 March 1917, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.4.34.

⁸⁹ Journal entry, 11 May 1916, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.134.

⁹⁰ Journal entry, 22 March 1917, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.272.

the true and complete history of his involvement in Canada's early years was never published. A controlling perfectionist, Steele could not accept that because of a lack of interest and declining sales, never mind the war, no second edition would materialize. He believed it was the publisher's duty to produce a second edition of the memoir and correct the mistakes of the first edition, which had jeopardized his legacy. *Forty Years in Canada* was much more than an autobiography for Steele. He viewed it as a significant history that would educate readers about the events he had witnessed during his career in Canada and South Africa and explain why he was an important figure in the "story of Empire building."⁹¹ Therefore, he also had a responsibility to himself and the public record to make sure that the flawed first edition was replaced – a task his son would later try to complete. Although Steele wrote letters to Herbert Jenkins in 1915 and 1916 that suggested that he was no longer angry and was satisfied with *Forty Years in Canada's* sales and reviews, in private he revealed a growing bitterness over his poor treatment by the publisher and others. In September 1916, he wrote in his journal about looking at the book manuscript and realizing "more will have to be done to it. It is a pity it was done the way it was. The publisher has much to answer for."⁹²

Steele also believed that the second edition was necessary to document his involvement in the First World War, especially as the vital hero who stood up to Sam Hughes, the Canadian Minister of Militia and Defence.⁹³ Harwood argued that Hughes, jealous of Steele's success, found out that his father had been prescribed digitalis for an irregular heartbeat and "seized on it as a pretext to retard his advancement."⁹⁴ Even when Steele was granted command of the Second Canadian Division, he was deemed too old for front-line command in France. This depiction of Steele as a frail and elderly man, more than anything else, necessitated the need for a revised *Forty Years in Canada*. Steele wanted the opportunity to counter Hughes and to put back information cut from the first edition.⁹⁵ He planned to add material to the Canadian chapters; however, it is interesting that he did not write about similar plans for the South African

⁹¹ Niblett to Steele, 11 April 1914, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.1.2.232.

⁹² Journal entry, 23 September 1916, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.2.68.

⁹³ Steele to Niblett, 29 March 1915, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.4.33.

⁹⁴ Harwood Steele, statement re. health, retirement and death of the late Maj. Gen. Sir Sam Steele, Steele Collection.

⁹⁵ Steele to Herbert Jenkins, 28 March 1915, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.4.33.

chapters.⁹⁶ While Steele had originally “kept out much which really should have been written about the events” in order to placate Lord Strathcona, he did not make any attempts to rectify the situation even after Strathcona’s death. He simply may have wanted to focus on the Canadian sections, which made up the majority of the memoir. While Steele “wish[ed] to be accurate” and produce a history of his time in Canada and South Africa, he was more concerned with correcting the damage caused by Hughes’s claims and presenting himself in the best possible light.⁹⁷

In 1910, Samuel Benfield Steele tried to arrange a loan in order to self-publish his memoir. Perhaps if he had been successful or if he had found a local publisher willing to work with him, he would have been able to produce the definitive record of his life that he so desired. Encouraged by Roger Pocock and other friends, he decided to forgo local publication in favour of the prestige of publishing with a British house. He was naïve when it came to the realities of publishing, however, and his decision resulted in his losing control of the process. An increasingly frustrated Steele found himself relegated to the margins of a complex transnational publishing operation centred thousands of miles away – an operation that produced a memoir with little resemblance to what he had envisioned placing in readers’ hands. He had initially believed that he could simply order his experience into print and “make a most interesting book.”⁹⁸ To his great dismay, he found he was wrong.

SOMMAIRE

Par la publication de ses mémoires *Forty Years in Canada*, parus en 1915, Sir Samuel Benfield Steele voulut redorer son image auprès du public. Il prit toutes les mesures en vue de démentir les divers racontars circulant sur son compte dans les journaux et les ouvrages de fiction. Si Steele s’était fixé comme objectifs de coucher sur papier l’histoire véridique de la Rébellion de la rivière Rouge, la ruée vers

⁹⁶ Steele to Niblett, 29 March 1915, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.1.4.33; Steele to Niblett, 3 April 1915, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.1.2.262; Steele to Niblett, 9 April 1915, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.1.2.262; Steele to C.A. Harwood, 16 April 1915, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.1.2.262; G.A. French to Steele, July 1915, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.1.2.265.

⁹⁷ Steele to Baden-Powell, 13 March 1910, Steele Collection, MS 2008.1.1.1.3.11.

⁹⁸ Steele to Marie Steele, 22 March 1909, Steele Collection, MS 2008.2.1.1.1.881.

l'or du Klondike et autres événements ou incidents qui en firent un héros, il en fut quelque peu déçu par les résultats. En effet la publication en 1915 d'un condensé de ses mémoires lui donna un goût amer. Il eut conscience que la vérité historique et sa réputation personnelle furent écorchées pour des raisons d'affaires. Cet article retrace les étapes de la publication des mémoires de Steele ainsi que sa collaboration avec la journaliste du *Winnipeg Telegram*, Mollie Glenn Niblett, qui fut son agente et éditrice. Même si la publication de la première édition rendue possible par Niblett l'irrita, il se montra en fin de compte indulgent à l'égard de cette dernière en manifestant son mécontentement à quelqu'un d'autre. On apprend en conclusion qu'il tenta d'obliger son éditeur britannique, Herbert Jenkins, à publier une deuxième édition en deux volumes afin de rectifier les erreurs contenues dans la première.